

Cypress Basin Clean Rivers Program

4 11 2019 Stakeholders meeting

Minutes

The meeting was called to order at 10:07 am at NETMWD Executive Offices in Hughes Springs Texas. There were 20 attendees present including Rebecca Dupont, TCEQ CRP Project Manager for the Cypress Basin.

Robert Speight, NETMWD Water Quality Team Leader, thanked everyone for attending and asked everyone to introduce themselves and share their interest in the Basin activities.

The first presentation was on the Draft 2018 Basin Summary Report by Randy Rushing with WMS. Randy went over new listings and delistings. He detailed trend analysis data for selected sites that showed statistically significant trends in various constituents and led discussions on possible causes and remedies. He mentioned the ongoing battles with aquatic invasive species such as Zebra Mussels and Giant Salvinia. He also talked about expanding our sampling program to include 24 hour DO and pH in Lake O the Pines due to the new listing of this water body for pH.

Tim Bister, District Fisheries Biologist with TPWD was next. His staff works on all the lakes in the Cypress Basin looking at fish populations and habitats. . Tim gave a lake by lake update on activities and the amounts of each invasive species on the lakes and any control efforts that took place within the last year. Caddo Lake has the most problem with aquatic invasives due to the large amount of Giant Salvinia on that lake. Lake O the Pines has a small established population of Giant Salvinia. The area impacted is the upper lake upstream of the Hwy 155 Bridge. NETMWD, USACE and TPWD have an MOU in place for aquatic herbicide applications. Giant Salvinia is regularly brought in on boat trailers from other lakes but thanks to the vigilance of USACE and TPWD personnel who have regularly patrolled all the ramps at the lake the infestations remains limited to the upper lake area.

Dr. Christopher Churchill gave a presentation on Cyanobacteria, Cyanotoxins and Algae blooms. He is working with TCEQ to collect data on a number of lakes across Texas to test different detection methods to determine the best tool to use for screening level assessments. He is using a couple of different test kits as well as YSI EXO sondes with Total Algae Sensors for his work. He has worked on Lake O the Pines and presented the results to the group. He also is working with the Caddo Lake Institute to do a more thorough study on Caddo Lake. He sampled at over 30 locations on Caddo using his screening method and now is going back and looking at the sites that indicated the most likely areas for Algal activity. He hopes to have all the laboratory analysis completed soon. He has found Cyanobacteria levels in all the lakes he has sampled to be elevated. This in itself is not a concern for a widespread bloom however, as he put it "All the players are present" in these lakes and it will just take the right combination of events to set off a possible bloom.

Keith Cook with the Corps of Engineers gave an update on activities in and around Lake O' the Pines (LOP). As a result of flooding in 2015-16 there were a number of trees killed due to inundation for a long period of time. The Corps has been doing a salvage harvest and is in the process of replanting these areas with water tolerant species such as Oak and Cypress. This will be a multiyear process. They will replant as funding becomes available. They are also doing some prescribed burns in areas to reduce the fuel loads and to enhance habitat. Keith mentioned that the LOP crew is receiving a new airboat this year so they will be able to do more scouting for invasive species in and around the lake.

Robert Speight gave the group an update on the Implementation Plan of the TMDL for Dissolved Oxygen on Lake O the Pines. Robert reported that as part of this I Plan, NETMWD is continuing to administer OSSF regulations and septic permitting in Upshur, Morris, Marion and Cass counties. Robert also shared the results of the 2018 Phosphorus monitoring. The Total Phosphorus Load Agreement is a contract between the Cities and Industry with WWTPs that flow in above LOP, as well as NETMWD and TCEQ. This contract states all the WWTP's must reduce their phosphorus output by 56% of their permitted amount and will submit data to NETMWD on their flow and Total Phosphorus releases monthly and NETMWD will track these releases to ensure compliance with the TP reductions outlined in the TMDL. Robert showed the spreadsheet used in this tracking. The data shared by the entities shows an overall reduction in Total Phosphorus well beyond the requirements of the TPLA. Most of this is due to the improvements that Pilgrims has made to its WWTP. Four of the entities had levels that were above their allocated limit. Walt Sears, NETMWD executive director, led a discussion on the program and how the Pilgrims efforts had gone above and beyond their requirements resulting in an overall reduction of TP in excess of 78%. Walt said that NETMWD would initiate conversations with the entities that were not making their targets and work with them to find a solution.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:18 pm